

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method for assigning functions between participants in a communications  
2 arrangement comprising a plurality of participants, the method comprising the  
3 steps of:  
4 assigning, to a first participant from the plurality of participants, one or more  
5 functions to be performed by the first participant;  
6 prior to a failure of the first participant, designating a second participant from the  
7 plurality of participants to perform the one or more functions if any of one  
8 or more handoff criteria are satisfied; and  
9 in response to any of the one or more handoff criteria being satisfied,  
10 assigning the one or more functions to the second participant.
- 1 2. The method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising unassigning the one or more  
2 functions from the first participant.
- 1 3. The method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising  
2 prior to a failure of the second participant, designating a third participant from the  
3 plurality of participants to perform the one or more functions if any of one  
4 or more handoff criteria are satisfied; and  
5 in response to any of the one or more handoff criteria being satisfied,  
6 assigning the one or more functions to the third participant, and  
7 unassigning the one or more functions from the second participant.

- 1 4. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more functions include  
2 initiating and controlling communications between the plurality of participants.
- 1 5. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein communications between the  
2 participants are made on different frequencies over time.
- 1 6. The method as recited in Claim 5, wherein each participant from the plurality of  
2 participants communicates with other participants during a particular time range.
- 1 7. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein each participant from the plurality of  
2 participants communicates with other participants during a particular time range.
- 1 8. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the communications arrangement is a  
2 wireless communications arrangement and the plurality of participants is a  
3 plurality of wireless devices.
- 1 9. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more handoff criteria  
2 include a request from the first participant.
- 1 10. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more handoff criteria  
2 include the first participant not communicating within a specified amount of time.

- 1 11. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more handoff criteria  
2 include a failure of the first participant.
- 1 12. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more handoff criteria  
2 include the first participant being out of range of one or more other participants  
3 from the plurality of participants.
- 1 13. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein:  
2 the first participant is a master participant,  
3 the second participant is a slave participant prior to being assigned to perform the  
4 one or more functions, and  
5 the second participant is an associate master participant after being designated to  
6 perform the one or more functions if any of the one or more handoff  
7 criteria are satisfied.
- 1 14. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the second participant is designated by  
2 the first participant.
- 1 15. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the second participant is designated by  
2 one or more participants from the plurality of participants.
- 1 16. A computer-readable medium carrying one or more sequences of one or more  
2 instructions for assigning functions between participants in a communications  
3 arrangement, the one or more sequences of one or more instructions including

4 instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or  
5 more processors to perform the steps of:  
6 assigning, to a first participant from the plurality of participants, one or more  
7 functions to be performed by the first participant;  
8 prior to a failure of the first participant, designating a second participant from the  
9 plurality of participants to perform the one or more functions if any of one  
10 or more handoff criteria are satisfied; and  
11 in response to any of the one or more handoff criteria being satisfied,  
12 assigning the one or more functions to the second participant.

1 17. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, further comprising one or  
2 more sequences of additional instructions which, when executed by the one or  
3 more processors, cause the one or more processors to unassign the one or more  
4 functions from the first participant.

1 18. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, further comprising one or  
2 more sequences of additional instructions which, when executed by the one or  
3 more processors, cause the one or more processors to  
4 prior to a failure of the second participant, designating a third participant from the  
5 plurality of participants to perform the one or more functions if any of one  
6 or more handoff criteria are satisfied; and  
7 in response to any of the one or more handoff criteria being satisfied,  
8 assigning the one or more functions to the third participant, and  
9 unassigning the one or more functions from the second participant.

1 19. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more  
2 functions include initiating and controlling communications between the plurality  
3 of participants.

1 20. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein communications  
2 between the participants are made on different frequencies over time.

1 21. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 20, wherein each participant  
2 from the plurality of participants communicates with other participants during a  
3 particular time range.

1 22. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein each participant  
2 from the plurality of participants communicates with other participants during a  
3 particular time range.

1 23. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the  
2 communications arrangement is a wireless communications arrangement and the  
3 plurality of participants is a plurality of wireless devices.

1 24. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more  
2 handoff criteria include a request from the first participant.

1 25. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more  
2 handoff criteria include the first participant not communicating within a specified  
3 amount of time.

1 26. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more  
2 handoff criteria include a failure of the first participant.

1 27. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more  
2 handoff criteria include the first participant being out of range of one or more  
3 other participants from the plurality of participants.

1 28. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein:  
2 the first participant is a master participant,  
3 the second participant is a slave participant prior to being assigned to perform the  
4 one or more functions, and  
5 the second participant is an associate master participant after being designated to  
6 perform the one or more functions if any of the one or more handoff  
7 criteria are satisfied.

1 29. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the second  
2 participant is designated by the first participant.

1 30. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the second  
2 participant is designated by one or more participants from the plurality of  
3 participants.

1 31. A communications device comprising:  
2 an interface configured to receive data from a plurality of communications  
3 devices and to transmit data to other communications devices; and  
4 a mechanism communicatively coupled to the interface and configured to:  
5 perform one or more functions, and  
6 prior to a failure of the communications device, designate a particular  
7 communications device from the plurality of communications  
8 devices to perform the one or more functions if any of a set of  
9 handover criteria are satisfied.

1 32. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more  
2 functions include initiating and controlling communications between the plurality  
3 of communications devices.

1 33. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the communications  
2 device is a wireless communications device and the plurality of communications  
3 device is a plurality of wireless communications devices.

1 34. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more  
2 handoff criteria include a request from the communications device.

- 1 35. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more  
2 handoff criteria include a failure of the communications device.
- 1 36. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more  
2 handoff criteria include the communications device not communicating within a  
3 specified period of time.
- 1 37. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more  
2 handoff criteria include the communications device being out of range of one or  
3 more of the plurality of communications devices.
- 1 38. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein:  
2 the communications device is a master participant, and  
3 the particular communications device is an associate master participant.